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ABSTRACT

Research concerning the status of college students and college faculty at U.S. colleges and universities is summarized in a large chart (17 by 22 inches). Patterns in the college curriculum and instruction are also reviewed. The information reflects many positive changes for women in postsecondary education. It also shows that, more than a decade after the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, sex bias still pervades college and university life. Facts include the following: the typical rank for a female faculty member is that of untenured instructor; affirmative action policies have not significantly increased the percentage of women on higher education faculties; the salary gap between female and male faculty continues to widen; in the early 1980s, women make up the majority of the postsecondary student population; women earn about half the bachelor's and master's degrees awarded each year, one third of the doctoral degrees, and one quarter of the professional degrees; many women attend college on a part-time and reentry basis; and content analysis studies demonstrate that many postsecondary texts continue to stereotype male and female roles and exclude women from the narrative and content. (SW)

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Sex Bias in Colleges and Universities

The Report Card

#2

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Sex Bias in Colleges and Universities

Faculty

- The typical rank for a female faculty member is that of untenured instructor. The typical rank for a male faculty member is that of tenured full professor (Sandler, 1979; National Center for Education Statistics, 1978-1981; Finkelstein, 1982).
- By the early 1980s, 74 percent of college faculties were male and only 26 percent were female. Seventy percent of the men were tenured, but only half of the women were tenured (National Center for Education Statistics, 1981).
- The distribution of women on college faculties resembles a pyramid. At the base, 30 percent of all instructors are female. But only 30 percent of assistant professors, 20 percent of associate professors and a mere 10 percent of full professors are female (National Center for Education Statistics, 1978-81; Chronicle of Higher Education, 1982).
- Affirmative action policies have not significantly increased the percentage of women on higher education faculties. Since the passage of Title IX in 1972, the percentage of female full professors has gone from 9 percent to 10 percent. In fact, the percentage of women at every academic rank was higher in 1920 than in 1970 (Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, 1973; Chronicle of Higher Education, 1982).
- The salary gap between female and male faculty continues to widen. On the average, women now make $6,374 less than men. In 1978, the salary gap was $3,500. The gap results from two factors: inequities in salary among female and male faculty at the same rank as well as the greater number of males at the higher ranks. Salary discrepancies range from an average of $1,000 for instructors to an average of $3,854 for professors (Report on Education Research, 1983; Rubin, 1984).
- The retirement gap is improving due to a 1983 U.S. Supreme Court decision banning sex-based pension plans. This decision affecting faculty women all across the country represents a first step toward ensuring that men and women receive the same level of benefits (School Law News, 1983).
- There are currently 283 (nine percent) female chief executive officers in colleges and universities across the country. Fifty-two percent of these women head four-year private institutions, and two-thirds head coeducational institutions (American Council on Education, 1983).
- It is characteristic of postsecondary faculty to work together as a network to eliminate sex inequities in their institutions and professions. Similar activities are not common in elementary and secondary education (Klein and Bogart, 1984).
- Postsecondary administrators are more likely to facilitate changes for sex equity suggested by faculty advocates than they are to initiate these changes themselves. Faculty who have been successful in achieving change for sex equity cite the support of high level administrators as critical to success (Klein and Bogart, 1984).

Students

- In 1930, women were 38 percent of students in postsecondary institutions. Today, women make up the majority of the postsecondary population (Klein and Bogart, 1984).
- During the decade of the 1970s, women earning bachelor's degrees increased by more than 25 percent; those earning master's degrees increased by more than 60 percent; and those earning doctoral degrees by more than 100 percent. Women earning professional degrees increased by more than 550 percent. Today, women earn approximately half the bachelor's and master's degrees awarded each year, one third of the doctoral degrees, and one quarter of the professional degrees (Klein and Bogart, 1984).
- Data on numbers of women in postsecondary education do not reflect the quality of academic life. Many women attend college and university campuses on a parttime and re-entry basis. The majority of women who are enrolled in postsecondary institutions are at the less expensive and less prestigious public junior colleges (National Center for Education Statistics, 1983).
- While women are pursuing postsecondary education in greater numbers, standardized test scores do not reflect this progress. Men and women attain similar scores on the verbal section of the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Graduate Record Exam (GRE). However, males attain much higher scores than females on the SAT and GRE quantitative subtests (Gordon and Addison, 1984).
- College financial aid practices continue to reflect the biases of the past. Low income female students receive $.68 for every dollar of college earnings received by men. Women also receive 28 percent less in grant awards and 16 percent less in loans than their male counterparts. Females apply for financial aid most often in their first year, and these requests decrease over time. For males, the reverse is true, and their financial aid applications increase over time. Female students are more likely to drop out of school because of unmet financial needs than are men (Moran, 1984).
- Although returning adult women learners are more effective academically than other groups of students, they are also more likely to be parttime students with other employment (Ekstrom and Marvel, 1984; Klein, 1984).
- The higher the degree received, the greater the disparity in the rate of female unemployment. Professionally trained women are far more likely to be out of work than their male counterparts (Vetter and Babco, 1981).
- A woman with a college degree will typically earn less than a man who is a high school dropout (U.S. Department of Labor, 1980).
- Today a male who graduates from college can anticipate earning $329,000 more than a male who graduates from high school. In contrast, female college graduates will earn only $142,000 more than female high school graduates (Klein, 1984).

Curriculum and Instruction

- Decades of research indicate that active student participation in the classroom is related to higher achievement and more positive attitudes toward school. Despite this research, studies document the following patterns:
  - —Classrooms became less interactive as the grade level increases. Elementary classrooms are more interactive than high school classrooms. High school classes are more interactive than college classes (Sadker and Sadker, 1982).
  - —In elementary, secondary and postsecondary classrooms, male students receive more teaching attention than female students. Female students are less likely to participate in classroom discussions and are more likely to be invisible members of classrooms (Sadker and Sadker, 1982; Thomas, 1983).
  - —A handful of students account for over 50 percent of the total classroom interaction in postsecondary classrooms (Karp and Yoels, 1976).
  - —Postsecondary teachers rarely call on specific students. Rather they direct questions to the whole class. The current norm in college classrooms is for both teacher and student to avoid any type of direct personal confrontation with one another (Karp and Yoels, 1976).
- Study after study on teacher effectiveness demonstrates that clear and specific teacher feedback is related to student achievement (Squires, et al., 1983). Despite this research, elementary, secondary and postsecondary teachers provide diffuse feedback during classroom discussion and tend to accept student responses with comments such as "uh-huh" and "OK." There is more acceptance in postsecondary classrooms than praise, remediation, and criticism combined (Thomas, 1983).
- Sex segregation characterizes many postsecondary classrooms (Thomas, 1983). Later, when students enter the world of work, occupational sex segregation channels women into lower paying jobs.
- Many postsecondary female students report that they are frequently ignored, stereotyped, and discriminated against by their instructors (Hall and Sandler, 1982).
- Women's studies courses in postsecondary education are more likely to be in the areas of visual arts, literature and the social sciences. These courses are far less frequent in the traditionally male-oriented areas of science, math, and physical education (Klein and Bogart, 1984).
- Content analysis studies demonstrate that many postsecondary texts continue to stereotype male and female roles and exclude women from the narrative and content (Sadker and Sadker, 1980).
- Prior to Title IX, women were 15 percent of all participants in intercollegiate athletic programs. By 1980, they were 30 percent. However, inequities still remain. Although nearly one-third of all athletes are women, they receive only one-sixth of the total budget for athletic activities (The National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs, 1981).

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The Mid-Atlantic Center for Sex Equity is one of ten regional assistance centers funded by the United States Department of Education to provide assistance to public school districts in meeting the requirements of Title IX and achieving sex equity. For further information or assistance please contact:

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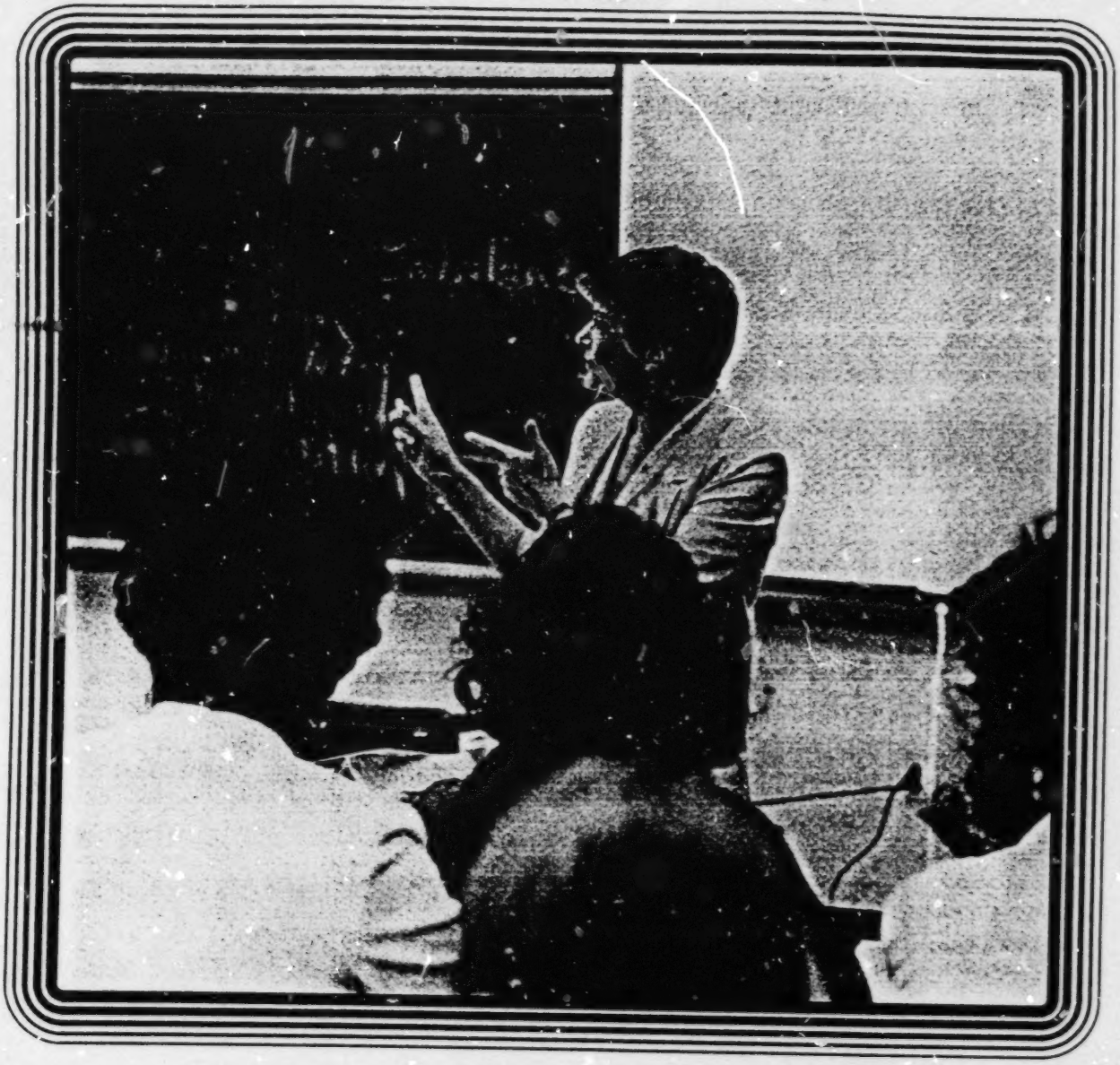

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An Introduction

This report card summarizes research and draws a profile of what is happening to women in colleges and universities. It offers information on faculty, students, curriculum and instruction.

The information reflects many positive changes for women in postsecondary education. It also shows that, more than a decade after the passage of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, sex bias still pervades college and university life. Faculty, staff, and administrators must be informed about this bias in order to establish more equitable policy and practice in postsecondary education.

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